



# The ByLine

WINTER 2022

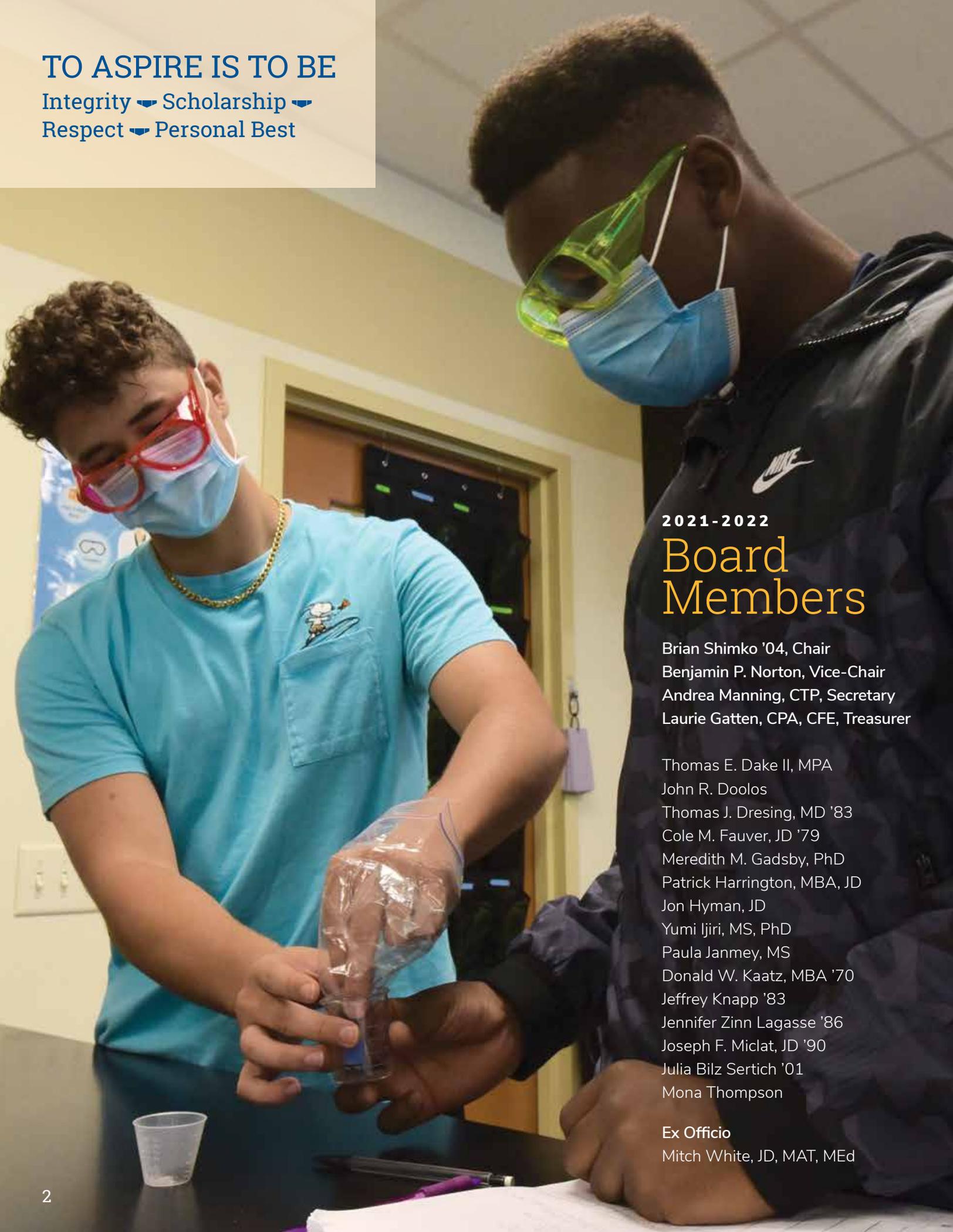


**BECOMING ROYALS:  
BUILDING A LEGACY**

TO ASPIRE IS TO BE

Integrity ▾ Scholarship ▾

Respect ▾ Personal Best



2021-2022

## Board Members

Brian Shimko '04, Chair  
Benjamin P. Norton, Vice-Chair  
Andrea Manning, CTP, Secretary  
Laurie Gatten, CPA, CFE, Treasurer

Thomas E. Dake II, MPA  
John R. Doolos  
Thomas J. Dresing, MD '83  
Cole M. Fauver, JD '79  
Meredith M. Gadsby, PhD  
Patrick Harrington, MBA, JD  
Jon Hyman, JD  
Yumi Ijiri, MS, PhD  
Paula Janmey, MS  
Donald W. Kaatz, MBA '70  
Jeffrey Knapp '83  
Jennifer Zinn Lagasse '86  
Joseph F. Miclat, JD '90  
Julia Bilz Sertich '01  
Mona Thompson

Ex Officio

Mitch White, JD, MAT, MEd



# Mission

Our mission is to send into a changing world confident young people of integrity who think critically and creatively while embracing the joy of lifelong learning.



## The ByLine **WINTER 2022** Table of Contents

- 04** Meet the New Board Chair
- 06** Campus Highlights
- 10** Congratulations to the Class of 2021
- 12** New Faculty and Administrative Staff
- 14** Becoming Royals: Building a Legacy
- 18** Advancement: A Look Back
- 20** Alumni News
- 26** Faculty News



### Editor:

Lauren Higginbotham,  
*Assistant Director of  
Advancement*

### On Cover:

Alumni from varying years pictured with their children who are all current Lake Ridge Academy kindergarten students.

### On page 2:

Two Upper School students in the chemistry lab separating a mixture of iron, silicon dioxide, and salt.

## WELCOME NEW BOARD MEMBERS

### MEREDITH GADSBY, PhD



Meredith (Solomon '25 and Senait '31) is an Associate Professor at Oberlin College, as well as Special Assistant to the President for Racial

Equity and Diversity. She earned her BA at Vassar College and an MA and PhD from Binghamton University. Meredith serves on the Marketing and Enrollment Committee.

### JULIA BILZ SERTICH '01



Julia (Anthony '34) earned her BA in Broadcast Journalism from American University. She and her husband Michael '01, own

three Jimmy John's restaurants and one Biggby Coffee shop. Julia served as Chair of the Alumni Council for three years, and currently serves on the Advancement Committee.

### MONA THOMPSON



Mona (Jack '28 and Ben '30) earned her BS in Pharmacy, Master in Public Health, and Doctor of Pharmacy from The Ohio State

University. She is a Senior Quality Improvement Specialist and Evidence Based Practice Program Coordinator at UH Rainbow Babies and Children's Hospital. Mona serves on the Marketing and Enrollment Committee.



## A LETTER FROM THE NEW BOARD CHAIR BRIAN SHIMKO '04

### Dear Lake Ridge Families,

For those whom I haven't had the chance to meet yet, I am a proud graduate of Lake Ridge and have been on the Board for four years. I spent five years as a student at the school and credit my love of learning and my passionate curiosity to my time there. We have a unique community that encourages growth without competition and inclusivity with empathy. Lake Ridge has always felt like home to me, and I hope you find the same.

Before we turn our gaze towards the current school year, I would like to spend a few moments reflecting on the past two years. No one could have imagined the challenges that we would face from those early days back in March of 2020. The level of uncertainty was immense, including whether schools would be allowed to have in-person teaching. It has long been Lake Ridge's view that our campus and classrooms are a key contributor to the education of our students, including their social-emotional well-being. Lake Ridge was a loud voice in declaring that we would be open and that we would do whatever it takes to do so. That was easier said than done.

First, I would like to thank our families for being engaged, innovative, and flexible. What makes Lake Ridge special is our community and I'm proud to be a part of a group that rose to the challenge and became more involved than ever. We are successful because our students, parents, grandparents, and alumni allow us to be. Thank you.

Second, I would like to thank our teachers and staff. You are the unsung heroes of these times. While many other professions had the ability to work from home, you found a way to reinvent the classroom to accommodate both in-person and remote collaboration—all while keeping a smile on your face. The amount of extra hours that were put in have not gone unnoticed. I am humbled by your passion and commitment to Lake Ridge Academy. Thank you.

I look forward to seeing the wonderful things that we accomplish together in 2022. Thank you for your dedication and support.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Brian Shimko'.

Brian Shimko '04  
Board Chair

## AN INTERVIEW WITH BRIAN



### What is your assessment of the school as you take over as Board Chair?

Lake Ridge has a wonderful and unique community of passionate students, parents, and teachers. We flourished in a very tough environment last year where everyone involved went over and above what was asked of them. I'm encouraged that we are returning to some sense of normality and we can get back to our 'regularly scheduled program.'

### What are some of your top priorities as Chair?

The job of the Board is to ensure that our leadership team has a sound strategy, robust policies and procedures, and resources to accomplish the vision of Lake Ridge. The role of the Chair is to be the lead voice of the Board. Our priorities are what they have always been—namely to ensure that we provide the best educational experience for our students, a rewarding and fulfilling career for our faculty and staff, and the stability of our school for years to come.

### How does your successful professional career inform your work on the Board?

Our firm invests in and partners with early stage companies. These companies are trying to change the future through innovation, thought leadership, and grit—not too dissimilar to what we teach our students.

### What does Lake Ridge Academy mean to you?

I was very lucky for the opportunity to attend Lake Ridge starting in the 8th grade. My parents made considerable sacrifices for me to do so. The experience was life changing for me in that it awakened an insatiable curiosity to learn and collaborate. Lake Ridge has always felt like home to me. I hope it feels the same way for everyone else.

### What do you tell alumni who haven't recently been engaged with the school?

Great things are happening in North Ridgeville. If you haven't seen the Kemper

Science and Engineering Building or been through the Fine Arts Building, come on by—we would love to have you.

### What is your favorite place on campus?

There is something special about the commons area in the Upper School. It's a unique place that serves as the foundation of the school community. It all starts with how the seniors lead by example, which then filters through to the rest of the school.

### What is your favorite memory from when you were an LRA student?

When I was in Upper School, there were two language options—Spanish with Sr. Catanese or French with Mme Suskin. At my prior school I took Spanish, so it made sense to continue on with Sr. Catanese. After class one day, he came up to me completely unprompted and said, "Brian your family is from Sicily and my family is from Sicily. I'm going to teach you Italian." So I ended up taking both languages!

## PLEASE JOIN US FOR THESE UPCOMING EVENTS:

**MARCH 10, 2022**

Lower School Concert

**MARCH 11, 2022**

Career Day

**MARCH 16, 2022**

Upper School Choral Concert

**APRIL 20, 2022**

Lower School Play-In

**APRIL 23, 2022**

Culture Fest

**MAY 6, 2022**

Grandfriends' Day and  
Middle School Musical  
Emma: A Pop Musical

**MAY 12, 2022**

Grades 4-12 Strings Concert

**MAY 18, 2022**

Middle and Upper School  
Choral Concert

**MAY 28, 2022**

Graduation

**JUNE 6, 2022**

Annual Alumni and  
Friends Golf Outing

# Campus Highlights

## WELCOME BACK ROYALS!

After a challenging 2020-2021 school year, our faculty, staff and students were happy to return to campus with some sense of normalcy in August. During the first full week of school, Mr. White kicked off the year alongside Student Body President, Joel Lacoste '22, with the first all-school assembly since December 2019. This was closely followed by many traditional back-to-school activities such as the Middle School's Community Building Days, the Upper School's Thank Goodness We're Back in School (TGWBS) Olympics, Dot Days in the Lower School, and the Homecoming Dance.

These events brought renewed life to our campus. With each event, our students built a stronger sense of community and belonging. The school grounds have been transformed through the service our students completed on Year of Service Kick-Off Day and through preparations for the barn and silo project. Read more about these exciting additions to campus on page 20.



# Campus Highlights

## YEAR OF SERVICE KICK-OFF DAY

On September 24, students, faculty, staff and parents enthusiastically participated in the annual Year of Service Kick-Off Day. The Year of Service Kick-Off Day aims to build school camaraderie and a sense of community, while giving students a chance to learn about the importance of service and environmental responsibility.

Most projects employed a buddy approach, in which older students worked side-by-side with younger students to make a difference while building relationships. Many students scattered across campus tackling beautification projects, while several classes traveled off-campus to expand their impact. Students volunteered at South Central Park, Cascade Park, Carlisle Reservation, North Ridgeville City Hall, and Lakeview and Huntington beaches. They cleaned up community grounds and planted trees, all while learning about the native plants and animals that inhabit these areas.

On-campus, students weeded the Lower School front flower beds and butterfly garden, built a lending library, helped the Parents Association with their mums sale, and dug out the Big Dig pit to make it larger.





## WIPEOUT MR. WHITE

On the first Friday in October, Mr. White and six other faculty members volunteered to be dunked in a dunk tank by students across divisions. Leading up to the event, the school was abuzz with excitement.

For a chance to be the one selected to dunk their teacher, students were asked to “give their grade” plus 60 cents (i.e. first graders gave \$1.60, twelfth graders gave \$12.60). Why the extra 60 cents you may ask? Well, with Lake Ridge having been founded in 1963, the school is quickly approaching its 60th anniversary! As a tribute to this incredible milestone, we asked that students give an additional 60 cents in honor of the school they love so much.

The event was a splashing success and students from all grade levels enjoyed the festivities. A special shout out to the following teachers for being dunked not once .... but many times, in support of the school’s Annual Fund:

- Mr. Barker
- Mr. Harris
- Mr. Culley
- Mr. Unger
- Mr. Eckendorf
- Mr. White
- Mr. George

Wipeout Mr. White not only served as a playful back-to-school event, but also provided an opportunity to teach our students about the importance of giving back to Lake Ridge Academy. We are thrilled to be instilling a culture of philanthropy here at Lake Ridge, and hope to continue this tradition for years to come.



## FALL FAMILY DAY AND SOCCER UNDER THE LIGHTS

Written By: Kate Dake, Parents Association President

The warm fall weather made our 2021 Fall Family Day and Soccer Under the Lights celebration a huge success! The day was spectacular as we celebrated Lake Ridge Academy and all it has to offer. Younger kids and their families kicked off the day with the 2nd Annual Lorain County VeloSano Trike and Bike event. Lake Ridge put its best foot forward by welcoming riders from the greater community to ride alongside our Lower School students. Afterwards, everyone danced, ate, played, and all together helped raise over \$14,000 in support of pediatric cancer research at the Cleveland Clinic!

In the afternoon, our Lake Ridge families made the most of our beautiful 93-acre campus. From fishing in the pond to ponies in the paddock, festive fall crafts and games to a hay wagon tour of campus; families of all ages enjoyed the sunny October day. We showcased the arts with our Royals Got Talent Show, and cheered on our student-athletes with a Spirit Rally that led into an Upper School volleyball game. When the sun began to set and the lights went on, our families filled the stands with signs and pom poms to cheer our Royals soccer players to victory!

Thank you to all the parents, staff and volunteers who helped make the event a success! Spending time as a community felt long overdue after the challenges of the past year. We also want to give a special shout out to the students who participated, including those from Club Med, Dante House, the Green Society, and the baseball team.



## 2021 NATIONAL MERIT SCHOLARSHIP COMPETITION

Congratulations to seniors Tanish Makadia, Alex Masgras and Tyler Young for being named 2021 National Merit Semifinalists, and Aashna Lakkaraju, who earned Commended Scholar recognition in the 2021 National Merit Scholarship competition.



**Aashna  
Lakkaraju**



**Tanish  
Makadia**



**Alex  
Masgras**



**Tyler  
Young**

# Graduation

## CONGRATULATIONS TO THE CLASS OF 2021!

Written By: Rhett Rybarczyk

As Director of College Counseling, I believe that the most important part of the college search process is building strong relationships—both with students and their families. Only by understanding each family’s needs in conjunction with student academic interests and extracurricular passions, can we work to find the best fit. While the 2021 college search and admissions cycle proved to be one of the most challenging and selective years in admissions history, I consider it a success for the class

of 2021. When our traditional meeting model was upended, our community seamlessly adapted to meeting virtually. When our students couldn’t visit campus in person, they engaged with colleges in other meaningful ways. I’m proud of how the class of 2021 adapted to both the pandemic and a new Director of College Counseling. Their welcome ensured my first year was, in countless ways, a rewarding one. I am honored to serve the families and students of Lake Ridge Academy.



### CLASS OF 2021 COLLEGE MATRICULATIONS

Our 33 graduates matriculated to the following colleges and universities and garnered \$3 million in college scholarships!

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| Linxuan “Lily” Bai<br>Syracuse University               | Valencia Nguyen<br>The Ohio State University<br>College of Engineering |
| Nicole Barens<br>Lorain County Community College        | John Odle<br>University of Dayton                                      |
| Jiajun “Steven” Cao<br>Boston University                | Ali Omar<br>The Ohio State University                                  |
| Adrienne Chan<br>Harvard University                     | Kevin Ostrica<br>Gap Year  |
| Kisan “Chris” Chapadia<br>Cornell University            | Pablo Pineda<br>Dartmouth College                                      |
| Ziyi “Zoe” Chen<br>The Ohio State University            | Kayla Pocos<br>University of Cincinnati                                |
| Marco Ciccariello<br>John Carroll University            | Luke Psenicka<br>Miami University                                      |
| Zaxarias Diamantis<br>Cleveland State University        | Hania Rahman<br>The University of Akron                                |
| Jianru “Joy” Guo<br>University of Wisconsin-Madison     | Gabriel Ramos Costa<br>Institute of Marangoni, Milan                   |
| Kate Kastelic<br>Chattanooga State Community<br>College | Abriana Rosu<br>Kent State University                                  |
| Kaili Klimas<br>Alvernia University                     | Suneal Saini<br>The Ohio State University<br>College of Engineering    |
| Abigail LeFebvre<br>The College of Wooster              | May Slusher<br>Kent State University                                   |
| Tianle “Taylor” Li<br>University of Washington, Seattle | Yanhao “Mickey” Tang<br>University of Connecticut                      |
| Ningshan Li<br>The Ohio State University                | Eric von Bethmann-Hollweg<br>Hobart and William Smith Colleges         |
| Hanjun “James” Liu<br>Rutgers University-New Brunswick  | Taylor Wolff<br>Butler University                                      |
| Emma Miller<br>Allegheny College                        | Xinchun “Judy” Zhu<br>University of Wisconsin-Madison                  |
| Kayla Nguyen<br>Ohio University                         |  |

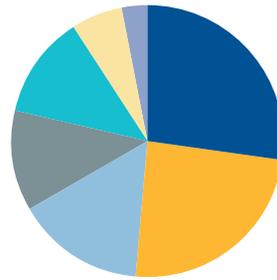


## CLASS OF 2021 ACHIEVEMENTS

# 1

- NATIONAL MERIT SCHOLARSHIP FINALIST
- NATIONAL MERIT COMMENDED SCHOLAR
- NATIONAL MERIT SEMIFINALIST
- LATINO NATIONAL MERIT SEMIFINALIST
- HISPANIC SCHOLARSHIP FUND SCHOLAR

## CLASS OF 2021 DESIRED AREA OF STUDY



- 9 UNDECIDED
- 8 BUSINESS, MARKETING AND VISUAL COMMUNICATION DESIGN
- 5 ARTS AND HUMANITIES
- 4 BIOLOGY AND CHEMISTRY
- 4 SOCIAL SCIENCES
- 2 ENGINEERING
- 1 ARCHITECTURE

## CLASS OF 2021 NATIONAL MERIT SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM HONOREES AND HISPANIC SCHOLARSHIP FUND SCHOLAR

The National Merit Scholarship program is an academic competition for recognition and scholarship funds that began in 1955. About 1.6 million juniors entered the program by taking the Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test. The top scores in critical reading, mathematics and writing skills advance only 16,000 students to the Semifinalist list. Fifteen thousand finalists are selected based on academic records, written essays, participation in school and community activities, evidence of leadership and any other honors or awards received. Only 7,500 National Merit Scholarships are awarded nationally each year.

Congratulations to Chris Chapadia who earned National Merit Semifinalist and Finalist recognition last year. Abriana Rosu was named a Commended Scholar, representing the top 5% of the nation's top high school seniors.

Founded in 1975, The Hispanic Scholarship Fund (HSF) empowers students and parents with the knowledge and resources to successfully complete a higher education, while providing support services and scholarships to as many

exceptional students as possible. HSF strives to make college education a top priority for every family across the nation, mobilizing communities to proactively advance that goal—each individual, over a lifetime, in every way they can. Congratulations to Pablo Pineda on being named one of 10,000 students nationwide as a Hispanic Scholarship Fund Scholar.



**Chris Chapadia**  
National Merit Semifinalist and Finalist



**Abriana Rosu**  
Commended Scholar



**Pablo Pineda**  
Hispanic Scholarship Fund Scholar and Latino National Merit Semifinalist

# Faculty News

## WELCOME NEW FACULTY AND ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF



### Hayley Munroe

Director of Advancement

Lake Ridge Academy welcomed Ms. Hayley Munroe as the new Director of Advancement this past June. Hayley comes to Lake Ridge with many years of experience as a consultant at InBloom Consulting. She has vast knowledge of

comprehensive campaigns, advancement and major gift solicitations, annual giving, strategic planning, events and more. Highlights of her career include her involvement in the Say Yes to Education Campaign, which raised \$93 million in nine months and in Lake Ridge Academy's auction galas in 2017 and 2018.

When she first heard about the potential job opportunity, Hayley was drawn to apply, remembering her prior experience with Lake Ridge, saying, "I've been incredibly lucky to know the culture and community of Lake Ridge. LRA feels like home." Since her arrival, she's enjoyed getting to know her fellow colleagues and the students.

Hayley holds a Bachelor of Business Administration from Kent State University. She's a native of Boston, Massachusetts, but now resides in Bay Village. In her spare time, Hayley enjoys hiking in the Metroparks with her Blue Heeler, Wallaby, and spending time at home with her cat, Bowser. In addition to working as a consultant, Hayley also owned a dance studio, The Studio, for six years, and recently sold the business to a former employee.

## NEW FACULTY AND STAFF



### Ryan Herhold

Assistant Director of Marketing



### Nicole Kingston

Lower School Music Teacher



### Elizabeth Russell

Upper School History Teacher

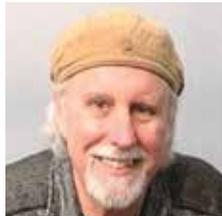
## CELEBRATING FACULTY AND STAFF MILESTONE YEARS OF SERVICE

### 30 YEARS



### Sue McDonald

Middle School Administrative Assistant



### Kevin Ruhlman\*

1959-2021  
Cleaning



### Vicki Dufford

Accounts Payable Specialist



### Kim Parrish '87

4th & 5th Grade Math



### Andy Wright

Upper School Science



### Karen Yost

Accounts Receivable Specialist

### 15 YEARS



### Carolyn Alexander

Upper School Digital Art & Technology



### Tim Unger

Middle School Director



### Peter Eckendorf

Director of Athletics



### Scott Hamper '07

Upper School Technology



### Todd Morrison

Middle and Upper School Engineering/Technology



### Sara Svoboda

Learning Specialist



### Jen Szwagulak

Assistant Director of K-1 Admissions

### 5 YEARS

# JENNIFER SHAW

Excerpted from the farewell letter written by the Lower School Faculty

When thinking of Jennifer's departure from Lake Ridge at the end of this past school year, her tenure can be best described as "moving and wildly exhilarating."

Jennifer Shaw spent 17 years at Lake Ridge Academy, and most recently served in the roles of Lower School Music Teacher, Fine Arts Department Chair, and Coordinator of the Center for the Fine Arts. When new to Lake Ridge, Jennifer developed our successful Lower School music program based in Orff Schulwerk, a pedagogy which she wove with Kodaly and Dalcroze methods to create what is undeniably the best way to develop young children into true, creative, and often, lifelong musicians.

In 2004, Jennifer envisioned and designed our Center for Creative Thinkers after-school program, which she ably ran for a number of years. Jennifer was a dedicated partner in the creation of the Center for the Fine Arts and the School of Fine Arts, offering not only her expertise in the musical education of young children, but also her experience in teaching music appreciation and theory at the collegiate level.

Jennifer's dedication to her career and Lake Ridge Academy led her to seek advanced certifications in Orff Schulwerk, in order to work as a guest clinician for music education students at a number of colleges around the country, and in professional service as the President of the Greater Cleveland Chapter of the American Orff Schulwerk Association. As Jennifer created programming for Lake Ridge, she wrote about her work and has been published a number of times, frequently putting our school in the "limelight" in the articles.

Jennifer's wildly exhilarating nature has now moved her to accept a new challenge in a career that can only be thought of as joyous. At the start of this school year, Jennifer began teaching elementary school music at the American International School of Guangzhou, China. While her departure will be profoundly felt by her students and colleagues, a big part of that feeling is our joy for her.



# BECOMING ROYALS: BUILDING A LEGACY

As members of the Class of 2034, Anthony, Grace, Ravi, Brooke, and Alice are children of the following six alumni:

Michael '01 and Julia '01 Bilz Sertich

Sunita Mathew '95

Joe Raj '89

Kari Sommer Halko '01

Thommy Butchko '04



**At the start of the 2021-2022 school year, Lake Ridge Academy welcomed five children of alumni into Mr. Bendik and Mrs. Haase's kindergarten classes. These eager young students are perfect examples of how Lake Ridge has grown in the nearly sixty years since its founding.**

Since the school's founding, our goal has remained the same, to *prepare students for the world ahead*. With nearly two thousand alumni, Lake Ridge Academy is proud to have successfully enriched the hearts and minds of so many eager students from Lorain County and its surrounding communities. With each passing year, a growing number of parents seeking an exemplary learning environment for their children have chosen Lake Ridge Academy for its sprawling 93-acre campus, highly educated and committed faculty, and understanding of what constitutes doing one's personal best. These are just a few of the reasons why at the beginning of this school year, six alumni chose to launch their children's educational journeys at Lake Ridge Academy.

## **WHERE A PASSION FOR LEARNING BEGINS**

At Lake Ridge Academy, our faculty strive to instill a deep love of learning amongst our students. For those who begin kindergarten at LRA, they are met with a child-centered learning approach that encourages them to pursue their interests, think critically and creatively, and to appreciate their impact on the community and larger world.

For those six alumni, choosing Lake Ridge Academy for their children was an easy decision. From their first day in kindergarten, students are actively engaged in a rich, hands-on curriculum that is play-based in nature. Through natural world education, our students begin to understand the world through their innate sense of wonder, exploration and imagination.

It is also through play and a natural world education that our kindergarteners begin to know themselves as learners. Students learn that they can communicate their thoughts and ideas from their earliest days in school, which in turn helps them become independent, curious, and self-aware. Each kindergarten student enters Lake Ridge at a different stage in their early childhood development, and throughout the school year, they are encouraged to learn at their own pace. Because of the small class sizes in each grade level, our kindergarteners receive individualized attention on a daily basis, which ensures their education remains relevant, enriching and challenging.

## **BUILDING A LEGACY**

For those six alumni, choosing Lake Ridge Academy grew out of a desire to give their children the same education they once received, supported by a welcoming community that ignites curiosity. Their choice also serves as a reflection of their strong belief in Lake Ridge's active and authentic learning approach.

From the time when these six alumni were students at LRA, the Lower School's approach to learning has largely remained the same. For generations, our faculty have embodied the idea that "childhood is a journey, not a race". For alumni like these, they are sure that the strong academic and social foundation students gain in kindergarten and the Lower School enable them to confidently progress to the next level. And now, as we prepare to enter the next decade of our school's history, we are proud to have a growing number of families continuing their legacy at Lake Ridge Academy.

## **WHAT DOES LEGACY MEAN?**

Legacy, in terms of education, means someone who has a close family member, normally a parent, who attended the same school. But in a grander sense, legacy helps one decide how they want the world to perceive them and how their impact on the world will live on.

# BECOMING ROYALS: BUILDING A LEGACY

## WHAT IS IT LIKE HAVING YOUR CHILD(REN) AT YOUR ALMA MATER?



"It is very comforting to see my daughter at Lake Ridge because I know she is getting the best education possible, in a community where she will make lifelong relationships with classmates and teachers."  
Thommy Butchko '04

"My children are now the third generation in my family to attend Lake Ridge, which is exciting and reassuring. I know my children are getting the best education in a secure family environment."  
Kari Sommer Halko '01



"I am so proud that my son and daughter are able to share in the special 'family' that is Lake Ridge. The relationships they are developing now will likely remain part of their lives forever, as they have remained for me. How fortunate am I today and will they be, down the road!"  
Joe Raj '89



## WHAT MADE YOU CHOOSE LAKE RIDGE ACADEMY FOR YOUR CHILD(REN)?

"We are both lifers, so we only know one way to go to school and that is at Lake Ridge Academy. I cannot imagine my kids not sharing the LRA experience with us—small classes, teachers getting to know you, exploring a huge campus, being encouraged to participate in all aspects of student life, and making lifelong friends."  
Michael Sertich '01 and Julia Bilz Sertich '01



"Class size is incredibly important to me. I feel that during these formative years, children will benefit tremendously from smaller class sizes with more individualized attention."  
Sunita Mathew '95



# INTERVIEW WITH THE KINDERGARTENERS

Q&A

## QUESTIONS:

1. What is your favorite thing about kindergarten?
2. What do you want to be when you grow up?
3. What do your parents do for a living?
4. What do you think your mom or dad's favorite special was when they were an LRA student?

## ALICE:

1. Recess.
2. Be a teacher at Lake Ridge.
3. Mommy works at school and Daddy works in Key Tower downtown.
4. Gym.



## ANTHONY:

1. Computer lab.
2. A builder, so I can build houses or electronics.
3. Dad is the boss at Jimmy John's and Bigby. Mom is the boss at home. She takes me to school and packs my lunch and takes me to fun places. Mom takes care of me and Kate.
4. Mom liked music and Dad liked library.



## BROOKE:

1. Learning letters and having fun.
2. A teacher.
3. Mommy works at her office with Papi (Grandpa) and Daddy works as a State Trooper.
4. Mommy loved PE and all sports.



## GRACE:

1. Library and computer lab.
2. An actress and a teacher.
3. A child psychiatrist and a businessman.
4. Music.



## RAVI:

1. All the friends I have and the nice teachers.
2. A book-maker.
3. A doctor.
4. Recess.



# Advancement

## GIFT FROM THE HEART 2020 UPDATE

Each year, the Lake Ridge Academy community comes together to fund a single campus project through Gift from the Heart at the school's annual Auction Gala. Alumni, parents, teachers and friends of the school collectively pledge financial support with their bid paddles or via mobile bidding to make a transformational impact on our students and campus.

In the past, Gift from the Heart projects have funded \$135,000 in technology infrastructure upgrades, \$170,000 for the Carol Klimas Scholarship and CRC makeover, and \$150,609 for several campus safety and beautification projects.

In November 2020, donors raised a staggering \$240,000 for an incredible barn and silo that are currently being built. At the start of the school year, we launched a community-wide contest to name the project and we were blown away by the overwhelming number of creative entries we received. The outdoor learning spaces, made possible by the extraordinary generosity of our donors, will be named...

### Aspiration Acres

The name, proposed by a board member and parent, draws inspiration from our school's motto, "To Aspire is to Be."

### Thank you, Gift from the Heart 2020 donors, for funding this exciting project!

Aspiration Acres, an amazing addition to our campus, will greatly benefit the Lake Ridge Academy community. It will provide numerous educational opportunities that will support and enrich curricula for many years to come. Additional outdoors structures that will be funded by Gift from the Heart are listed below.

- Outdoor classroom with seating for up to 50, including electricity and running water, fire pit, fruit trees, and farm table situated in and around a relocated farm silo
- Cistern and natural rain garden
- "Sugar Shack" in the woods to support our long-standing tradition of 2nd and 5th grade buddies maple sugaring projects
- Chicken coop that will house up to 20 chickens, with the first one named Doc McCluckins by a student



**PAST GIFT FROM THE HEART PROJECTS:**

**\$135,000**

for technology infrastructure upgrades

**\$170,000**

for the Carol Klimas Scholarship and CRC makeover

**\$150,609**

for several campus safety and beautification projects

**2020 GIFT FROM THE HEART PROJECT:**

**\$240,000**

for an incredible barn/silo project

## GIFT FROM THE HEART 2020

Guests at the 2020 Auction Gala offered \$240,000 for the barn/silo project, which has now been named Aspiration Acres. Their gifts have funded all aspects of the project, including the nearly completed chicken coop, and securing a historic barn that will soon be relocated to campus. Additional elements of the project are underway. We are so thankful for the generosity of the donors who helped bring this project to life.

Anonymous '04	Christopher and Julie Latkovic
Anonymous	Robert and Shelly Lee
Lisa Barrett	Jiayi Ma and Bihua Song
Pauline Kwok and Jim Bartyzel	Kevin and Lori McAllister
Aldryck and Dannette Bennett	Kurt and Leannie McAllister
J.B. and Nikki Bickerstaff	Antwon and Rachael McCray
Mike Brandyberry	Lindsay Mog
Manuel Carballo and Brook Escobedo	Phillip and Clare Navratil
Albert Chan and Annie Tan	Benjamin and Brenda Norton
Jelena Cheng '23	Jared and Jill Oakes
Steven and Shannon Conway	John and Deborah O'Neill
Alecia Crawford	Greg and Joanna Orloff
Kevin and Laura Crus	Jennifer Parrish '20
Dave Currie	Peter '86 and Kimberly Parrish '87
Parry and Leila Daiuto	Chris Pfeil '70
Thomas and Kathryn Dake	Regan Pore
Cesar and Vanessa Delgado	Neil Robertson '19
J.R. Doolos	Mark and Kristin Roshkowski '84
Robert and Sarah Dresing	Marinel and Deborah Rosu
Andrew and Jennifer Dunleavy	Norm and Elisabeth Ryan
Ian and Jessica Duthie	Govind Sandhu and Niyati Sheth Sandhu
Don and Sherry Esch	Charles Schwab
Michael and Amelia Farago	Michael '01 and Julia Bilz Sertich '01
Cole Fauver '79	Edmond and Nyree Skimin
Jonathon and Laurie Gatten	Allison Smith
Erin George	Richard Smith
Sean and Susan Haas	Ryan Smith
Patrick Harrington and Cynthia Brown-Harrington	Edward and Chann Spellman
Janel Hofstetter	Steve and Debbie Spencer
Greg Holzaepfel and Erin Currie-Holzaepfel	Peter and Erin Srsen
Durand and Tonya Hopkins	Nick and Erin Stellato
Jon and Colleen Hyman	The Blackbaud Giving Fund (matching gift)
Robert and Paula Janmey	The Norton Family Foundation
John and Betty Kemper	Christopher and Mona Thompson
John and Jenny Kemper	William and Audry Todia
Daniel and Carol Klimas	Transponder Island Inc.
Nicole Klue	James and Jayme Ward
Jeffrey Knapp '83	Rebecca Ruppert McMahon
Jennifer Zinn Lagasse '86	
William and Megan Lamb	
Howard and Laura Lane	

## GOLF OUTING

On June 7, 2021, Lake Ridge Academy held its annual Golf Outing. Our golfers enjoyed lunch, golf, and drinks on the patio at the beautiful Westwood Country Club. Without our golfers, volunteers, sponsors, and generous donors, this event would not be possible. **Thank you again to all of our golfers and to our wonderful sponsors!**



The Tom '83  
and Janna Dresing  
Family

Barnes  
Wendling  
CPAs



Bob, Cindy, and  
Jenna '15 Fairchild  
& The Plecha Family



# Alumni News

## FEATURED ALUMNI

## INTEGRATING TECHNOLOGY IN THE WORLD LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

### GAY ZOLDESZY RAWSON '90

This past November, alumna Gay Zoldesy Rawson '90, was awarded the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL)/Cengage Postsecondary Award for Excellence in Foreign Language Instruction Using Technology with the International Association for Language Learning Technology (IALLT). This national award for technology integration in the world language classroom is a well-deserved achievement for Gay, who currently serves as a Professor of French and as Chair of the Department of World Languages and Cultures at Concordia College in Moorehead, Minnesota.

Gay has been teaching with technology for more than fifteen years and was one of the people who founded and conceptualized the first Masters of Education program at her college. Dr. Rawson handled all of the program's online components, including developing the online pedagogy and determining how best to implement technology into the classroom.

In addition to her teaching at Concordia, Gay works with undergraduate and graduate students through a grant from the NSA, teaching other educators how to utilize technology in the classroom to best teach Chinese. As a novice Chinese speaker herself, Gay's primary goal in this program is to help foster meaningful interactions amongst the teachers and students using technology as an aid.

In the past year, as a result of the global pandemic, Gay has spent significant time collaborating with educators from other institutions, helping them pivot towards online learning. Gay's colleagues at Concordia were lucky to have her as a resource during COVID-19, as they had already been using technology in the classroom thanks to her guidance.

In February, Gay participated in the Joint National Committee for Languages (JNCL) - National Commission on Libraries and Information Science (NCLIS) Language Advocacy Days, where she was able to speak with representatives of Congress for Minnesota and North Dakota to advocate for four different bills that will help support language learning at the national level. Gay explains that now, more than ever, she understands the idea of keeping languages as an essential part of post secondary education, as not everyone recognizes their value.



For Gay, who started at Lake Ridge Academy in Middle School, she thanks educators such as Mme Suskin and Sr. Catanese for launching her love of language. She picked up French initially as a way to communicate with friends in Canada, and ultimately fell in love with the language. She traveled to France with Mme Suskin at sixteen years old, and is still happily in touch with her host family.

Thanks to the French language education she received at LRA, Gay was able to jump right into 300-level French courses upon arriving at Wittenberg University her freshman year. Although she started off studying pre-med, Gay stuck with her language courses throughout college and ended up a French graduate student at Miami University. This was closely followed by Gay earning her Ph.D. in French from the University of Iowa.



It was at the University of Iowa that, on a whim, Gay decided to take a coding class out of a desire to learn something new. She explained how this was quite a shift from her high school self, who was fearful of technology. Quickly, Gay became more confident using her newfound skills, and was hired by Cornell College in Mount Vernon, Iowa to teach part-time and update their web pages and computer exercises.

Today, Gay is thankful to have pursued a liberal arts education, as it has allowed her to have a wide variety of experiences and to connect her other interests with that of the French language. Although she did not ultimately pursue a medical degree, the medical thread can be seen throughout her life, including her dissertation and her travels abroad to Europe, Cambodia, Vietnam, and Haiti.

“Part of what Lake Ridge started and what I wish people would know, is that you don’t have to give up your language. You can still be that doctor or physicist. Knowing a language matches with any profession you want to do. It allows you to do it in more places and with more people.”

To read about some of Gay’s recent work in Haiti, visit [Concordia College’s website](#) for a story written about her travels.



# Alumni News

## FEATURED ALUMNI

### ADVOCATING FOR ACCESSIBILITY IN SCIENCE: ENVIRONMENTAL GEOLOGY

#### LILY KUENTZ '17



Young alumna, Lily Kuentz '17 recently graduated from Colgate University, located in Central New York, with her Bachelor's in Environmental Geology and minors in Film & Media Studies and Art History. Lily hopes to pursue a graduate degree somewhere out west, which stems from her desire to have access to a local field site. Unfortunately, due to the global pandemic, Lily learned firsthand the importance of having a local field site when she was unable to travel to Antarctica for a research trip this past year. Despite the setback, Lily was instead able to successfully conduct research on arctic hydrology entirely from her dorm room.

Earlier this year, Lily was listed as a contributing member on a research study published by the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the*

*United States of America (PNAS)*. The study, titled "Surface Boulder Banding Indicates Martian Debris-Covered Glaciers Formed over Multiple Glaciations," aims to show that, "like ancient debris-covered glaciers on Earth, boulder banding on Martian glacial deposits indicates multiple episodes of ice accumulation and advance."<sup>1</sup> Lily explained how she was fascinated by this project, because at first, the findings they expected to discover were not there, which in turn forced her and the other researchers to look through a different lens and come up with an alternate understanding of their findings.

Lily, who started at Lake Ridge Academy in first grade, credits Mr. Morrison and Ms. Alexander for helping to guide her interests throughout high school. Although starting freshman year in the School of





## We Want to Feature You in the Alumni Newsletter!



Did you recently graduate? Get a new job? Get engaged, married or have a baby? We want to share your important life updates with the Lake Ridge Academy community!

In addition to sharing alumni news in the biannual *ByLine* magazine, the Alumni Relations Office shares a quarterly alumni newsletter called **Lake Ridge for a Lifetime**. The newsletter aims to share alumni-specific news, highlight upcoming events, and keep you updated on reunion programming. We want this piece to be for you, our incredible alumni, so please, tell us what you'd like to see!

Don't miss out on receiving the quarterly alumni newsletter, **Lake Ridge for a Lifetime!** To make sure this newsletter lands in your inbox, visit [bit.ly/lra-keepintouch](https://bit.ly/lra-keepintouch) or email [alumni@lakeridgeacademy.org](mailto:alumni@lakeridgeacademy.org) with your updated contact information.

“A lot of cool stuff happens behind the scenes that would make it easier for people to understand how scientists arrive at their results. Part of getting to scientific literacy is making sure people understand how we produce science and how we discern the information.”

Fine Arts program, Lily quickly realized her interests were shifting more towards science. Despite no longer being part of the SoFA program by tenth grade, Lily felt that Ms. Alexander never pressured her to stay in the arts, but instead, allowed her to appreciate art while studying science.

Lily explained how she truly felt that the teachers at Lake Ridge want to see their students succeed, and she's lucky to have found that at Colgate University as well.

In addition to her coursework, Lily spent much of her time in undergrad working for the university's radio station. Starting off as a DJ, by sophomore year, Lily quickly rose to become General Manager. When we last spoke, she mentioned hopes of starting a podcast about making science more accessible. The podcast would focus on interviewing researchers at the university and expounding on what

it looks like to collect the research and achieve the desired results.

Lily hopes to someday become a professor and study climate change on Earth. As an educator, she wants to contribute to people's understanding of science in a way that is accessible.

We can't wait to see all that you accomplish in graduate school and beyond, Lily!

Visit CNN's website to read their coverage of the study Lily participated in.

<sup>1</sup> Levy, Joseph S., et al. "Surface Boulder Banding Indicates Martian Debris-Covered Glaciers Formed over Multiple Glaciations." *PNAS*, National Academy of Sciences, 26 Jan. 2021, [www.pnas.org/content/118/4/e2015971118?fbclid=IwAR2Av9WjEIBoHcPbMmYumFbc0fOKzHDJkKnsxEssCBAK7WN\\_fk8XgXkElyc](https://www.pnas.org/content/118/4/e2015971118?fbclid=IwAR2Av9WjEIBoHcPbMmYumFbc0fOKzHDJkKnsxEssCBAK7WN_fk8XgXkElyc).

# Alumni News



## 2007

**1** Last year, **Katarina Gardner** married Christopher Sams on October 9, 2020 in the Sunken Garden at the Cleveland Botanical Gardens. Due to COVID, they were joined only by their immediate families and their wedding party, which included Megan Gardner '03, Ashley Yu '07 and Ayushi Shah '07. Katie and Chris recently celebrated their one-year anniversary by carrying on a family tradition of planting a maple tree at Katie's family lake house in Vermont. Katie works for the Cleveland Clinic as a Cancer Research Coordinator and Chris is an associate attorney at Voudris Law. The new homeowners live in Pepper Pike, Ohio.

## 2009

**2** **Megan Esch** is so excited to announce her engagement to Jonathan Santiago. The couple met through a dating app back in 2016, and have made so many wonderful memories since. Megan hopes to marry her best friend in the fall of 2022.

**3** **Evan Severs** and his wife, Liz, welcomed their daughter, Ella Grace Severs, on April 10, 2021. Ella is the couple's first child, although they have a three-year-old yellow lab named Marty. Evan and his family live in Pittsburgh, PA.

**4** **Dominic Velloze** married Sona Shah on August 14, 2021 in front of their friends and family in San Francisco, CA.

## 2010

**5** **Jordan Thomas** married his college sweetheart, Jordan Only-Thomas, on Sunday, October 10, 2021. They had an intimate ceremony at the Mildred B. Cooper Chapel, followed by a reception at a venue in Springdale, Arkansas, where her family lives. The couple both live and work in Washington, DC.

## 2012

**6** **Emily Glor** married Ray Crook on July 17, 2021 in Granville, OH. They were fortunate enough to celebrate with all their friends and family present, and with Samantha Potoczak '12 as Emily's maid of honor. The couple now lives in Dublin, Ohio, and Emily is practicing dentistry in Sunbury and Johnstown.

## 2013

**7** **Jacob Dempsey** and Alex Combs were engaged in June during their first vacation post-shutdown. There is still no wedding date yet because in the words of an iconic Netflix reality show, "They are choosing mortgage over marriage."

## 2014

**8** **Taylor Soto** recently graduated from The Ohio State University with her Master of Arts in Speech-Language

Pathology. She now lives in Washington, DC and works at a hospital in Capitol Hill. As a medical speech-language pathologist, Taylor evaluates and treats patients in critical care with complex medical courses, who are tracheostomy/ventilator dependent and have swallowing, speech, language, and cognitive-communication disorders. She is currently in the process of becoming credentialed in Flexible Endoscopic Evaluation of Swallowing, which is a test utilized to determine problems and possible solutions for safe swallowing, and potentially limiting incidents of aspiration pneumonia. Taylor loves serving this population, and is working toward becoming a Certified Brain Injury Specialist, as well as a Board Certified Specialist in Swallowing and Swallowing Disorders.

## 2015

**9** **Rachel Smith** decided to leave the teaching field in 2020 to become a Child Life Specialist. She started this journey at Miami University in January 2021. Rachel is currently in the process of completing her coursework in Oxford, OH, and then will begin preparing for her practicum at the Cleveland Clinic. She is thrilled for the opportunity to work in this incredibly small and competitive field, and looks forward to moving back to Cleveland this winter.

## SUMMER REUNION

During the last weekend in July, alumni from near and far attended Lake Ridge Academy's Summer Reunion Weekend. Alumni participated in a sold out event at Topgolf on Friday night, followed the next day by a picnic on campus.

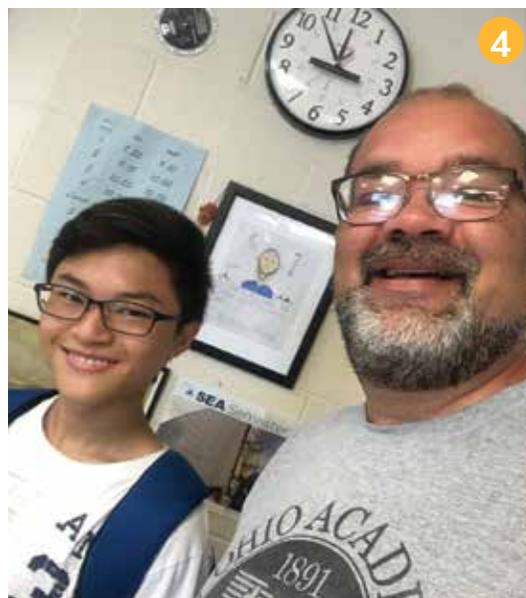
Head of School, Mitch White, offered tours of campus during the picnic, and the alumni in attendance echoed how impressed they each were by the changes made to campus buildings over the years.

Alumni from all different years attended the weekend's events, but most notably, it was members of the classes of '70, '71, '96, and the early 2000s.

Thank you to everyone who attended this summer's reunion weekend! We look forward to hosting more reunion events in the coming year!



# Faculty News



1 During the month of July, Middle School Social Studies teacher, **Mat Barker**, took part in the Klingenstein Summer Institute through Columbia University Teachers College. This highly competitive program brings educators from around the world to discuss and examine topics within grading, pedagogy, diversity, equity, and inclusion, as well as how to foster change within our schools. This program is open to all early educators who work at an independent school. During the two-week intensive program, Mat engaged with educators in daily whole-group sessions that covered equity and inclusion, as well as cognitive science. The groups met with other educators from their academic discipline to examine current teaching practices and to discuss differences in curriculum and assessments. Particular areas of focus for Mat were grading equity and the idea of standards-based grading practices, and the expansion of DEI initiatives on campus.

2 Lower School Music teacher, **Nicole Kingston**, has had multiple life events take place in the last few months! She gave birth to her first child at the end of June, moved from her home state of Colorado to Ohio in July, and purchased her first Ohio home with her husband in September. Nicole is very excited to be settling into her new teaching position, home, and role as a mother.

---

3 Choir teacher, **Cody Mott**, married Makayla Gosser on July 23, 2021 at Irons Mill Farmstead in New Wilmington, Pennsylvania. They honeymooned in Saint Lucia, an island in the West Indies, at the Coconut Bay Beach Resort and Spa. The couple spent much of their time poolside or at the beach, but did venture outside of the resort to go snorkeling in the Caribbean, enjoy a sunset cruise on a catamaran, and experienced a private tour of the island.

---

4 Middle School Science teacher, **Rob Robertson**, was recently recognized by The Ohio Academy of Science as an exemplar in science education and student research, and for incorporating inquiry-based research. At Lake Ridge, all of the 7th and 8th grade students are involved in their own science or engineering research. Rob says, "This allows students to understand that science and engineering are not actually the facts and content, but rather the processes that lead to those facts. Science and engineering are creative endeavors, like visual art or music. Instead of a painting or a song, we end up with a fact or a solution to a problem. The process is what it is really about. Students don't usually come to that realization until they begin original research, which often takes place in college or even later in their careers. However, here at LRA, we have been incorporating that into the Middle School curriculum for a long time." This process begins in 6th grade with a bit more structure and continues into the Upper School with our engineering courses and Institute for Scientific Research.

---

5 Drama teacher, **Kristy Rodriguez**, recently attended the Broadway Teaching Group's Workshop in New York City. She enjoyed three days with a group of 40 teachers from throughout the country to attend workshops on directing, sound design, choreography, marketing, and networking. The sessions were taught by the performers, designers, producers, and directors from the following Broadway shows: *Six*, *Thoughts of a Colored Man*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and *Tina: The Tina Turner Musical*. Kristy explained how much she enjoyed this unique opportunity to learn from theatre artists at the pinnacle of their careers.

## IN MEMORIAM



**Mark Merryman** passed away on May 17, 2021. Mark served the Lake Ridge community for 32 years in the cleaning and maintenance departments. He was steadfast and devoted to his job. Mark was a proud military veteran, had a hidden talent for drawing, and a weakness for donuts. His sardonic sense of humor made many of us smile, and he was always

quick to share a laugh with our students. Mark was incredibly kindhearted, as evidenced by the rescue kitten who chose him one day while he was working in the maintenance barn. For years, Mark opened the school every morning and ensured the snow and ice were removed from the walkways. He maintained the athletic fields and grounds, and was always happy to help set up events around campus. Mark will be dearly missed by our LRA community.

**Chris Geiselman** passed away on June 17, 2021 in Golden, Colorado. Chris was the husband of former Lake Ridge Academy Middle School Language Arts teacher, Greta Leshner. Chris is survived by his wife, son, Graham '02, daughter, Clare '06, and two grandchildren. After Chris' passing, his family generously asked that donations be made to the Chloe Geiselman Scholarship at Lake Ridge, in memory of his deceased daughter, Chloe.



**Kevin Ruehlman** passed away on September 2, 2021 at the age of 61. Kevin served Lake Ridge for over 30 years in the custodial department. He was always known for being a kind, gentle and funny friend. Both coworkers and parents fondly recall their afterschool conversations with Kevin. One colleague shared, "I am

grateful to have shared conversations with him. He was such a kind man. I enjoyed chatting with him after school." Kevin always had a smile and kind words for our students. He was an avid Cleveland sports teams fan and he loved to grill and barbecue for his family and friends. Kevin would often invite friends to his home, and one such friend explained, "Some years ago his wife and children were out of town and he asked me to come visit him. He grilled me a mouthwatering steak and a tasty baked potato. We had a few drinks and spent the day watching reruns of the Andy Griffith and Barney Fife show of Mayberry. It was his favorite sitcom show. I believe Kevin was a lot like Andy Taylor, with his friendly and calm demeanor."



37501 CENTER RIDGE ROAD  
NORTH RIDGEVILLE, OHIO 44039  
TEL: 440.327.1175  
[www.lakeridgeacademy.org](http://www.lakeridgeacademy.org)

Nonprofit Organization  
U.S. Postage Paid  
Elyria, OH  
Permit No. 419

# MAKE YOUR GIFT TODAY!

Gifts to the Annual Fund keep class sizes small, provide laboratory equipment, upgrades to technology, and help preserve our beautiful 93-acre campus. Your support is critical to helping our students achieve success and for ensuring the school's longevity.

[www.lakeridgeacademy.org/giving](http://www.lakeridgeacademy.org/giving)



Annual Fund

